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SUBJECT: JUSCANZ FOCUSES ON NEXT HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL  
SESSION

¶1. (U) JUSCANZ members met October 18 to review outcomes (or lack thereof) of the second session of the Human Rights Council (9/18-10/6) and to discuss enhancing coordination on issues coming before the next HRC session (11/27-12/8). The view, broadly shared in the group, is that President Luis Alfonso de Alba's approach to running the Council made a difficult and complicated situation more so. His preference for consulting small groups behind closed doors and for frequently changing which rules are used and how they are applied resulted in confusion and even greater distrust than is already the norm in the UN human rights body. Agreement was reached that JUSCANZ, ideally in cooperation with other like-minded delegations, would advise de Alba of States' requests for clarity and consistency in the application of rules of procedures, whether he chose to use the rules of UNGA committees or the ECOSOC rules that had governed the Commission on Human Rights. While not disagreeing with the group's decision, Norwegian Permanent Representative Wegger Strommem said that de Alba's management of the Council was a deliberate tactical decision to avoid what in de Alba's view would have been a disastrous outcome -- divisive votes on key issues such as Sudan/Darfur. He added, however, that the political realities of the Council were beginning to sink in and de Alba understood he could no longer avoid contentious issues.

¶2. (SBU) Australia, current JUSCANZ coordinator, circulated a proposed timetable and agenda to focus discussions within JUSCANZ and to facilitate outreach to other delegations. The proposal received broad agreement from other JUSCANZ members, who see the need to move beyond general position statements to concrete work on universal periodic review (UPR), mandate review, and modalities/work methods for the Council. JUSCANZ will hold weekly meetings to address the outstanding issues as well as meetings with select members of other regional and political groups. Outreach to other delegations is intended to counter what is seen as a disadvantage in the Western Group -- the European Union's (EU) reluctance to coordinate substantive issues within the group (septel). JUSCANZ is aiming to foster Council-related discussions across regional lines and to explore commonalities that may lead to joint efforts within the Council. Canada will organize an October 23 lunch with select GRULAC countries. The U.S. Mission will set up a meeting with select sub-Saharan African countries in early November. USDEL will also host a JUSCANZ meeting November 8 with Israel as a guest.

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT: While regional group solidarity is an especially valued trait in the African Group, other groups are hampered by serious differences. JUSCANZ's hope to

exploit those differences to find partners across regional lines is likely the best way to advance shared priorities. It is also a way to contain, at least in part, the power of groups like the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). END COMMENT.  
TICHENOR